



# Citizens by Choice

## Women in Business Leadership

June 11, 2008

Many Americans are surprised to learn that there is a large and growing group of immigrant women entrepreneurs and business leaders who are rapidly making their mark in the U.S. business sector, in every region of the country and across a wide range of industries. On June 11, 2008 the National Archives Experience presented a discussion program that explored the challenges these women face, and how have they used gender and nationality as strengths in building their businesses. This program was generously supported by the William G. McGowan Charitable Fund, Inc.

### Part I: Introduction

Thora Colot, Executive Director of the Foundation for the National Archives, Fruzsina M. Harsanyi, PhD, Vice President, Global Public Affairs for Tyco International, Inc., and Sue Gin McGowan, President, The William G. McGowan Charitable Fund, offer introductory remarks.

**THORA COLOT:** I'm Thora Colot. I'm the executive director of the Foundation for the National Archives. Tonight you're joining us for the first program in what we hope will be an annual series here in the William G. McGowan Theater celebrating the diverse roles and the powerful impact of women in leadership. As many of you know, the records here at the National Archives are powerful.



They're just really incredible, and many of them contain stories of women from all walks of life who have helped shape American history, including the nomination of the first female Supreme Court justice, the muster roles of women who dressed as men in order to serve their country in battle the police report diagram -- and this is one of my favorite documents here. It shows exactly where Rosa Parks sat on the bus. And don't forget the amendment giving women the right to vote.

And why did that take so long? Well, we even have the documents that tell us why it took so long. So tonight we're going to hear from a very contemporary group of women leaders who are making their mark every single day, and many of these women can also be found in the National Archives records—for example, in our naturalization records that exemplify the lives of those who choose to become Americans.

Naturalization records from the federal courts make up a large part of the Archives holdings and are among some of the most popular groups of records for genealogists, and not only in this building but nationwide in many of our regional facilities as well.

So tonight for you--now, I was supposed to tell you that you can pick up these, but I suspect they've been handed out, so most of you already have one, but if you don't, there are additional copies upstairs, and you can give them to your friends and relatives who then can come look you up here at the National Archives.

So tonight's panel features a distinguished and diverse group of women who are going to share some of their journeys with us as they became leaders in their respective fields.

But first it's my pleasure to introduce Fruzsina Harsanyi, who's a member of the Foundation's board of directors, who is herself both a prominent business leader and a naturalized citizen. Dr. Harsanyi is Vice President, Global Public Affairs for Tyco International, where she is responsible for managing the company's government relations and advocacy issues at the state, federal and international levels. Previously she held positions with ABB Inc. Combustion Engineering, which I think must be interesting, and the Continental Group. Dr. Harsanyi served as Special Assistant to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and has written and lectured on public affairs for more than 25 years, including at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and the Corporate Public Affairs Institute at Melbourne, Australia, which is where you're headed to, I guess. She serves on a wide variety of community boards and is a member of



the Business Government Relations Council, the Carlton Club, and the International Women's Forum, and in my opinion, her most important and prestigious role is she's one of our directors on the board of the Foundation for the National Archives. So I am delighted to welcome on the stage one of my favorite bosses, Fruzsina Harsanyi.

[Applause]

**FRUZZSINA HARSANYI:** Thank you so much. Don't worry. That was a very long introduction for very short remarks, because I am not the main show. The main show is over there. And I also wanted to tell you that that big, long introduction, if you boil it down, it's another way of saying I'm a lobbyist.

[Laughter]

OK? And when I was born in Budapest, Hungary, and my mother gave me the name of Fruzsina Harsanyi she didn't know I would be spelling it 10 times a day every day of my life. I came over on what later became a troop ship in the Vietnam War, and my first English words I learned from American soldiers. One I will not share with you, and the other one was forwhichitstands, and I hope you know what that means. It's "and to the republic for which it stands," and I thought it was one word. And, you know, that was my first English word. Little did I know that more than 50 years later, I would be on the board of the Archives Foundation and that I would spend some time in the walls and halls of this great building that reminds us what incredible treasures of democracy we have as both natural and naturalized citizens.

So here I am. I'm proud to represent the Archives Foundation, which if you don't know about it, you really should get to know about it. It is the organization that partners with the private sector to bring some incredible programs all year long to more than a million visitors who come here who have really unlocked this incredible treasure that is here and lets people know that there is more going on than the Charters of Freedom and the things that we grew up with and learned were in this building. It has really become a user-friendly, inviting building. And one of the wonderful places in this building is this theater, this beautiful, beautiful theater that's a perfect example of this public/private partnership that we have, and the Foundation helped raise the money to build it, but the real centerpiece of support that came for this theater was the William G. McGowan Fund, and it is the \$5 million that they gave to the theater that really made it happen. So the theater and the program that you have tonight and the programs that are going to come are really the inspiration of the McGowan family, and Sue Gin McGowan, who is here tonight to represent the McGowan Fund, is with the McGowan Fund Board, and I had a chance to get to know her a little bit before



this program. She herself is an entrepreneur a businesswoman, somebody who saw a long time ago what some businesses are only figuring out today about the tremendous importance of supply chain management and figuring out niche businesses and really making them into a success. She serves on numerous boards, and more than anything else, she understands that it's not enough to have the bricks and mortar of a building of a room, of a theater, but that you have to continue to nurture it and to stay with it and to bring people to it. It's not enough to build it and they'll come. You also have to do a lot of things afterwards, and Sue Gin has continued that commitment, and so I'm very proud to present her to you.

[Applause]

**SUE GIN MCGOWAN:** Thank you, Fruzsina. Tonight we are here to hear from a group of very outstanding women, all of them who are naturalized citizens and who have overcome the challenges of gender and nationality to emerge to the top. We have convened in Washington, D.C. the heartbeat of the nation that has been their platform for success.

Our setting is the William G. McGowan Theater at the National Archives, and no place could be more appropriate. Bill McGowan, my late husband, loved history loved movies. He loved debating the great issues of the day and so the William G. McGowan Charitable Fund which was established after Bill died in 1992, made an excellent decision 5 years ago to partner with the National Archives and to develop this theater. Here, important documents are kept and screened and cutting-edge ideas receive a real full hearing. At the start, the Fund, on whose board I sit also established an annual fall forum on commerce technology, and government inspired by these 3 outstanding programs where industry and government leaders exchanged key ideas, and we decided at that point that maybe we ought to have a second series—Women in Leadership program.

Each spring, the program will spotlight women in business, journalism, academia, the arts, science medicine, and tonight, the Citizens by Choice are going to inaugurate this forum. This forum is of particular interest to me because my own parents were citizens by choice.

They emigrated from China to Aurora, Illinois, a small town about 60 miles from Chicago, opened a restaurant. My mother grew food in her garden to help feed the family, and we stayed close to the Chinese community.

In fact, when I moved to Chicago alone at age 18 the only place that I had ever visited in the big city was Chinatown. An unexpected illness ended my college career after one year, and I went to work to pay medical bills and living expenses



and invested any extra money that I had in bricks and mortar. It was natural for me to make a full-time commitment into real estate. I was trained by an industry pro and established my own company. Along the way, I became a partner in several restaurants and an owner of a bakery, so I knew about food production, and I knew about presentation, and I moved on to my next venture-- airline catering. After being served a frozen sweet roll on a flight from Chicago to Washington, D.C., I met with the airline president and convinced him that I could improve their food. I won the contract to provide passenger meals and founded Flying Food Group in 1983. By rethinking typical airline fare and offering fresh foods in unique packaging, we helped our client build brand identity and passenger loyalty. Word spread within the industry within 2 years. We partnered with the catering arm of Air France to serve international airlines at O'Hare and other airports. Several years later, I was discouraged and my company was in debt because of the bankruptcy of my original and largest airline customer.

I knew I had to diversify, and I established a retail division that was not dependent upon the airline industry for growth. Today, Flying Food Group provides 200,000 meals daily for over 80 international airlines and 4,600 retail customers, including Starbucks and Disney. We have 16 production facilities around the U.S. and one in Shanghai, China. With over 3,400 employees, we are the world's third-largest supplier of airline meals.

As a Chinese-American woman moving ahead in a nearly all-male industry, I brought fresh approaches that challenged the established practices. I encountered obstacles and opportunities, opponents and mentors. But all successful entrepreneurs face this. It's part of being an innovator. This is true whether you're Chinese, Latino, Pakistani male, or female. Winston Churchill said, "Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without using your enthusiasm," and I will add to that. Transform your setbacks into steppingstones, and you will find yourself moving forward towards the next great opportunity. Thank you all, and on behalf of the McGowan Foundation thank you for coming.

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